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through which the ordinary traveller is glad to pass quickly.

The aspect of the country was very different from that which we had met south of Kanchow. On the Tibetan side the snow-covered Richthofen Range came closer and closer, while the Mongolian hills gradually diminished in size until they became mere sand-dunes, and then drifted off into the flat expanse of the Gobi Desert. The style of the country presented a good deal of variety, and lay in clearly defined sections running from north to south in narrow strips. Shaho, the first town of importance, was on a fertile band, and lay in the midst of orchards, in which the trees were then laden with ripe pears. Leaving these one mile behind us, we entered an area of loose sandhills, where we found it necessary to descend from our carts to lighten the weight for the animals. We plodded through the fine, dry slopes with a delightful sense of illusion that just over the horizon the sea must surely appear. A number of small sand-coloured lizards sunned themselves by the way; and raising their heads at our approach, they then made off at a great pace pursued by the carter, who derived much enjoyment from catching them by the tail. Our part in the sport was to sing and whistle, which immediately brought the little creatures to a standstill, and kept them spellbound for as long as we continued our tunes. About ten miles further on we passed a clearly-defined line of swamp, through which we approached the city of Fuyi. Here the water-wagtails kept pace with the cart, and a beautiful crocus-yellow-breasted variety flitted in and out of the rushes.

Fuyi was the smallest walled city we had seen, but stands surrounded by well-watered and prosperous farmsteads, owned by wealthy families. The hand of a

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484 last watch before dawn dragged itself slowly out. There was no telegraph wire to cheer us, there being no line to Tunhwang, so we were dependent for guidance on a landmark erected at each half-stage, and which by daylight was visible for many miles. At last our carter stopped at a tiny hut ; the men thundered on the door until an old woman opened it, and in a few minutes a crackling wood fire restored life and hope, as we stood round it in the little hovel reeking with opium fumes. Presently the old dame, seeing how perished we were with cold, threw a handful of dried leaves into a pot of boiling water, and ladled us out an infusion, in whose restorative powers she professed the greatest belief. It may have been the herb, or the fire, or her kindness, or perhaps the combination of all three, but most certainly we were presently able to go on our way with new strength.

It took us six hours to reach the gates of Tunhwang, and in the bitter cold of the hour before sunrise we were fortunate enough to pick up a bundle of straw, dropped from a peasant's cart, to which we set light, 361 and after warming ourselves, went on invigorated. All • 245 round the city are large orchards of a park-like character, watered by rushing streams, and planted with thousands of trees, a great proportion being pear trees, for the fruit of which the place is celebrated. The early frosts had already touched the leaves, and the whole scene 796 was ablaze as with golden flames. It was the fourteenth 782 day of the eighth moon (October 1st), the eve of the Moon Festival, when offerings of every description of fruit are made to that luminary, and the street stalls were piled with 'moon cakes,' apples, grapes and nectarines—an attractive spectacle to us after our weary journey.

The geographical position of the city is such as to